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SUGGESTED READING IN SPANISH-AMERICAN PROSE

It is as true now as it was in classical days that he more easily carries his point *qui miscuit utile dulci*, and thus it may be well in urging the study of Spanish-American thought to present the practical rather than the cultural value of such study, however much one may dislike the term "practical" in such a relation.

From this standpoint we may look at Spanish-American prose (reserving poetry for subsequent consideration) as a literature of knowledge rather than as a literature of power, as an invaluable, if not the sole, means of interpreting the social habits, national character and civic and moral ideals of our neighbors. "*Las letras son el mejor vehículo de los afectos.*"

By the people of the United States, the practical value of such study will be estimated largely by its relation to commercial ends. In this sense its value is more than merely linguistic. Professor Doyle, in his able address before the American Association of Teachers of Spanish, discussed the question of "commercial Spanish." It is not necessary to recapitulate his argument, save the conclusion that there is no such thing as "commercial Spanish" that can be acquired except by sound training in the language. Of equal importance to those engaged in foreign trade or foreign service is a thorough understanding of the thought, the *modo de pensar*, not only the symbols of thought but ideas conveyed by those symbols, as used by the people with whom they are brought in contact. There is however, a value greater than its commercial use growing out of the study of the Spanish language and Spanish-American thought, one that may be called a by-product and one that illustrates a fact not unknown in industries, that the by-product sometimes becomes more valuable than the original object. This value is the intellectual acquaintance that such study brings and the consequent effect in producing those conditions that make for wholesome and lasting relations with the American republics.

It is not the purpose of the present writer at this time to discuss or defend the study of Spanish-American literature, but merely to suggest a tentative and limited list of authors and works that seem most adequately to represent the thought, social conditions, and collective ideals of the Southern republics, prefixing these re-

marks in explanation of his point of view and principles of selection. For he believes it a fact within the observation of all teachers of adult students that the great interest in the study of Spanish through the country is in large measure due to a growing interest in the Hispanic nations of this continent, and that as such it represents not a *tumefaction* in a pathological sense, but, on the contrary, an exceedingly wholesome and desirable influence in our body politic that should be welcomed and encouraged by every one who believes in the development of those stable relations of peace and concord between the United States and the Spanish republics that constitute an indispensable condition to a true continental concert.

Briefly stated, the situation is this: North and south of the Rio Grande are two peoples, both of mixed ethnic stocks but each one of distinctive and homogeneous national character. These two peoples represent widely divergent cultures, different stages of material and political development, diverse historical antecedents, different languages and different racial and national ideals. Such differences, marked as they are, do not necessarily imply antagonism. On the contrary they may well be considered as complementary. There are, however, ample room and opportunity for both to develop their racial and national character and ideals to the fullest possible degree, without any question of absorption, assimilation or hegemony by the one with respect to the other.

It is evident, however, that we have approached Spanish America too much on the material side. In our disregard of its social habits and of its civic and cultural ideals, in our ignorance of the historical factors that have determined its political development, we have left ourselves exposed to the charge of materialism and self-interest. In a word, we are intellectual and social strangers, lacking in sympathy and understanding, a condition that has so accentuated the acknowledged differences of culture, religion, language and social habits that separate the Anglo-Saxon north from the Spanish south, that it has been easy for facile writers of both north and south to form a series of generalizations as to the impossibility of establishing any lasting inter-relations of confidence and sympathy that can be predicated only upon thorough acquaintance, reciprocal respect and clear recognition of mutual interests and common problems.

Such a condition is unfortunate. Moreover it seems unnecessary, and is being measurably dispelled by many agencies, among which

academic institutions are notably active. To forward the results of these efforts, to provide conditions and elements for their successful operation, it is the desire of the present writer to attempt to stimulate the study of Spanish-American thought by suggesting, in a wholly tentative way, some of the material available for university courses or for private reading.

A few words may not be amiss as to the principles that have guided the selection of titles, if indeed the charitable student will concede that any principle has been observed in choosing the few titles that follow, from the really large amount of material available for such a purpose.

For obvious reasons, choice has not been limited to prose of purely literary form and purpose. The question whether there exists, properly speaking, a Spanish-American literature has been discussed in South American centers. It is not a matter of great concern to the purpose of the present suggestions. Spanish-American authors for the most part have reflected European literary movements, especially those of France. To attempt to trace these movements and determine their influence is an interesting task for the intensive student of comparative literary history rather than for the one who is seeking an acquaintance with Spanish-American thought. Even the most recent and most important movement, modernism, which is commonly regarded as having been initiated by the publication of Rubén Darío's *Azul* in 1888, began as a distinct imitation and its significance to some critics has been a quickened and keener sensibility associated with increased flexibility of expression. This, as Rodó has pointed out, may constitute genuine originality. Growing out of this movement, however, is a serious effort on the part of many authors to perform in fuller measure one of the noblest functions of literature in interpreting what is distinctive in the racial and national character and environment, in raising ideals and creating a genuine and lofty Spanish-American personality, not limited by national aspirations but collective in character.

Furthermore works of formal historical content, with the exception of two or three reference works, are excluded, a familiarity with the general facts of political, economic and industrial history being assumed. Defective knowledge in these fields should and must be compensated by special reading or, in the class room, by lectures. It is indispensable that students of Spanish-American

life and thought should be well informed regarding the historical antecedents, especially the colonial period, for it cannot be stated too emphatically that failure to understand the race psychology and antecedent historical conditions means inevitable failure to understand Spanish-American political and cultural development.

Ingeniero's article *Notas sobre la mentalidad colonial* (Revista de filosofía, cultura, ciencias y educación, March, 1917) gives in brief an excellent background for the study of the revolutionary and later periods. These aspects can be studied in many other sources such as Quesada's *Vida intelectual*, Mitre's *Historia de Belgrano*, Bunge's *Nuestra América*, Bourne's *Spain in America*, García Calderón's *Latin-American Republics* and other works. There really is an embarrassment of riches in historical material dealing with Spanish America. It is hardly necessary to point out that Dr. Coester's *Literary History of Spanish America* is quite indispensable, being, as it is, the only comprehensive survey of Spanish-American literature in any language. For both its intrinsic as well as its relative merit, Dr. Coester's work is an honor to Hispanic studies in the United States. Reference may be made here also to Dr. E. C. Hills' excellent list of Spanish-American novels (Hispania, May, 1919), some of which are included and all of which are suitable especially for an intensive study of the novel.

The compiler has included titles which in his present opinion are representative of national divisions, collective ideals and literary value. They are chosen also with a view to their availability in the market. They should, moreover, be found in every large university and municipal library. As has been said, the list is tentative and the compiler will be grateful for suggestions from others interested in the subject as to changes, the end sought being the preparation of a selected list of works that most faithfully reflect Spanish-American life, thought and ideals. He believes, furthermore, that not only are the suggestions set forth of practical moment but that in the lofty and serene idealism and the fine conception of individual character and civic integrity of Hostos and Rodó we may find much that is stimulating and constructive in its bearing upon our own present-day problems. It has been said of our educational system that too much stress has been placed upon *rights* and too little upon *duties*. In relation to this question and to the general value of culture in human life, the two authors mentioned are most valuable. Sarmiento with his vigorous style, brilliant syntheses, vivid descriptions, staunch

and optimistic patriotism and enthusiastic advocacy of education will bring to us a realization of the perplexing and chaotic conditions that followed the war of liberation. Ethnic conditions are analyzed by Bunge, García Calderón, Blanco Fombona and Arcaya and social and political life of the day is well described by the novelists. In conclusion, the analysis of our own institutions as expressed by Sarmiento, Rodó and Blanco Fombona will assist us in seeing ourselves as our neighbors see us.

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